



On October 9, thousands of Coptic Christians took to the streets of Cairo to peacefully protest the failure of Egypt's interim military government to protect them from attacks against them and their churches. News reports indicate that civilians attacked the protestors and that the army, rather than restoring order, plowed personnel carriers through the crowds and fired on civilians. 26 protestors died and over 500 people were injured. On October 24, I signed on to a letter to President Obama urging him to denounce the Egyptian military's actions and urge the interim government to conduct a transparent and independent investigation of the incident.

On October 12, I signed on to a letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller urging the FBI to change its official definition of rape, which currently excludes male victims and cases in which the victim was drugged or under the influence of alcohol. Experts believe that this antiquated definition has contributed to the consistent underreporting of rape cases and local law enforcement officers overwhelmingly approve of the change.

On October 12, Congress took up three Free Trade Agreement (FTA) bills. I voted in support of the United States-Panama Trade Promotion agreement, but joined many of my Democratic colleagues in opposing the Colombia and Korea FTAs. The Panamanian FTA had minimal economic consequences to the United States but would help our government contractors secure work along their most important infrastructure project, the Panama Canal. My opposition to the remaining FTAs was based on two separate points of contention. With regard to the Korea FTA, the large size of their manufacturing base would allow them to compete with American production with unfair advantages such as significantly lower costs. Many American labor unions spoke out against this FTA, and they have my support. The Colombian FTA brought forward many concerns that humanitarian groups had with regard to the treatment of labor leadership. Indeed the mistreatments and even murders of union leaders is a serious issue and one that forced me to withhold support for the FTA. Working on broader economic ties in this global age is critical, and I support the work done by the President and the US Trade Representative, Ron Kirk.



~~SNAP is a federal program that provides food and nutrition assistance to low-income households. It is the largest federal program for food and nutrition assistance, providing benefits to over 40 million people. SNAP benefits are used to purchase food for household consumption. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in partnership with state agencies. SNAP is a critical program for many low-income households, providing them with the resources they need to purchase food and meet their basic needs.~~